

Evening Telegraph

PUBLISHED EVERY AFTERNOON (SUNDAYS EXCEPTED). AT THE EVENING TELEGRAPH BUILDING, No. 108 S. THIRD STREET, PHILADELPHIA.

The Price is three cents per copy (double sheet), or eighteen cents per week, payable to the carrier by whom served. The subscription price by mail is Nine Dollars per annum, or One Dollar and Fifty Cents for two months, invariably advance for the time ordered.

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 1871.

SUMNER ON SAN DOMINGO.

We lay before our readers the great speech of Senator Sumner on San Domingo delivered to-day in the Senate, and we hope that, in spite of its great length, it will receive all the attention the importance of the subject deserves. This speech is a bitter attack upon the administration, and while Mr. Sumner is exceedingly anxious to disclaim any personal motives, and to appear in the light of an impartial critic, it is impossible for him to conceal a spirit of vindictiveness which is far from adding force to his arraignment of the President and his advisers. The speech, however, is much more powerful than Mr. Sumner's first effort in the same direction, and it presents an array of facts in connection with the San Domingo negotiations which cannot fail to command the attention of the country, and to elicit criticisms not at all complimentary to the administration. Mr. Sumner charges that the President has practically made war upon San Domingo, that he has threatened Hayti, and that Bazin is a usurper who has been maintained in power by the forces of the United States in order that he may sell his country. He shows that we have now in Dominican waters twelve men-of-war, including two monitors, and very properly inquires why this display of naval strength should be necessary if the people of San Domingo are to be allowed to express a fair and unbiased opinion with regard to the desirability of annexation to the United States. He makes an unfavorable comparison between the negotiations carried on by Spain and those engaged in by the United States, and he gives an elaborate review of the Babcock-Hatch intrigues, and declares that the President has attempted to gain his ends by underhand means which are disgraceful to himself and to the nation. Mr. Sumner contends that in the San Domingo intrigues the great principle of the equality of nations has been violated, and that we are now engaged in oppressing a sister republic and an independent nation, which, from its very weakness, ought to be a special object of our generous consideration. He also elaborately reviews the case of Texas, and proves, to his own satisfaction at least, that no comparisons can be drawn between it and the San Domingo scheme, and he contends that the action of President Grant is a violation of international law, a violation of the Constitution of the United States, and a violation of public justice.

THE TAXATION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY.

The question whether a serious attempt should be made in this city to obtain municipal revenue from personal property has often been agitated in Councils. On the one hand such a policy is earnestly advocated, and on the other warmly opposed. As we are drifting along now, piling up a mountain of new municipal debt every year, and on the point of incurring new expenditures, there is nothing left but a choice of evils. If guidance is sought elsewhere, it will be seen that Philadelpia stands almost alone among American cities in her attempt to pay the expenses of a municipal government without imposing a heavy tax on personal property, and the result of her experiment is the largest municipal debt in this country, if not in the world. She may well pause, therefore, at the prospect before her, and shrink from increasing the taxes on real estate to the exorbitant rate demanded by the present and prospective demands upon her treasury. The best argument against a tax on personal property is probably to be found in the allegation that the public care less for it than for taxation on real estate, and that they are therefore less likely to insist on an economical administration of their affairs. But this argument has, after all, little real force in this community. Dust can be thrown in the eyes of a hundred thousand voters by loan bills so easily as by a resort to taxation on personal property; and the question forced upon us now is simply whether real estate must bear the whole of a series of burdens which are rapidly attaining fearful magnitude. To give an affirmative answer to this question is to decide at the outset that many wealthy men shall escape their legitimate share of municipal taxation. So far as the city is concerned, a banker worth millions, or a merchant prince, may, under the present system, pay less money into her coffers than any married mechanic who wishes to live in a house of his own. It is the tenant and not the owner of a house (unless he happen to be the tenant as well as the owner) who pays the tax on city real estate; and there are to-day tens of thousands of industrious struggling men in Philadelphia, paying, directly or indirectly, from forty to seventy-five dollars each, annually, into the City Treasury, while thousands of citizens who have large incomes either pay less sums or nothing at all. Taxation on real estate has but a single virtue—the difficulty of escape from it—and nearly all civilized governments (National and State, as well as municipal)—except Philadelphia—have made strenuous efforts to widen the basis of taxation, so that the pressure might not fall too heavily upon a single branch of investments. When money is needed, a tax on real estate

is one of the least efficient and, at the same time, one of the most oppressive methods of obtaining it. The experience of the National Government proves this. It obtains from Philadelphia, in one form or another, at least twice as much revenue as the municipal government, it taking from the city every few years an amount equal to her entire municipal debt; and yet the pressure of national taxation is trifling when compared with the pressure of notoriously inadequate municipal taxation on real estate. It is, of course, easy enough to discover objections to the taxation of personal property. Reasons as plenty as blackberries can be urged against it, and we would not advocate it except as a relief from the undue, and in some cases absolutely unendurable, pressure on real estate which is impending, if the city does not speedily increase her sources of revenue.

The conviction and sentence of John Brill for altering the election returns of the Sixteenth ward will, we trust, exercise a powerful influence in checking such flagrant and dangerous crimes. Tampering with the popular will by clerical manipulations must be sternly suppressed. The present mode of making up the returns of elections in this city affords great facilities for such rascalities, for after the returns of the respective divisions of each ward are summed up, the checks upon the ward return which comprises these details are lamentably inefficient, and a wide latitude is left for the manipulations of unscrupulous ward return judges. Since the law is defective, we are glad that the courts have commenced the work of punishing those who avail themselves of its loopholes, and this task should be prosecuted without fear, favor, or affection, until all the active fraudulent-return manufacturers of both parties are safely stowed away in the County Prison. Unfair elections and unfair returns are worse than no elections at all; and if republican government is to dwindle down to a mere contest of villainy and fraud, it will become a mere delusion and a snare.

JUDGE CADWALADER on Saturday, with—our reporter phrases it—"the tenderness and gentleness of manner which are characteristic of this kind-hearted gentleman in his administration of criminal justice," sentenced Percival B. Spear to an imprisonment of three years for the crime of forgery. The reason for this comparatively light punishment appears to have been because Spear has "always occupied the position of a gentleman," from which it might be inferred that if he had been some low fellow, unaccustomed to good society, the Judge would probably have been less tender-hearted. Spear's offense was one which called for severe punishment, if only that other would-be plunderers of the Indians might be warned, and the public interest would have been better served if the sentence had been much more onerous.

NOTICES.

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An entire new Stock imported and selected by Mr. GAY in Europe, to which the attention of the Public is invited. We will commence in our New Store on MONDAY, and offer goods at a great reduction on former prices. White French China Dining Sets, 127 pieces... \$13.00 White French China Tea Sets, 44 pieces... 5.75 White French China Tea Sets, 46 pieces... 6.75 Stone China Dining Sets, 98 pieces... 7.75 Stone China Cups and Saucers, per set 12 pieces... 5.00 Table Tumblers, per dozen... 50 Table Goblets, per dozen... 75 Glass Tea Sets (4 articles)... 45 Bohemian Cologne Sets, 2 Bottles and Tint Box... 90 An endless variety of Fancy Goods, at an immense reduction from former prices. Goods to go out of the city will be packed and delivered to transportation office free of charge, and insured against breakage to destination.

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